

Explore the Bible: July 16

Present • Jeremiah 29:4-14

By Don Schuman



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Often we hear from the receivers how greatly they appreciated our thoughtful words. If our notes of encouragement help people in difficulties, how much more did the Word of the Lord help a people in exile in a letter penned by Jeremiah. The Lord told them how to accept the exile.

Thrive (Jeremiah 29:4-7). The first step in accepting the exile was to settle in Babylon. This era of captivity was not the time to despair of life nor to resist the Babylonian Empire.

This exile was the punishment of God upon the Jews and they were to accept it as such. The Jews were to build homes, plant gardens, marry, have children, and pursue contentment in the foreign land.

Believers in Christ are sojourners in a strange country. This fallen world is not our ultimate home. Like Abraham's faith as described in Hebrews 11, we by faith look for city with foundations whose Builder and Maker is God.

Although we see sin and its destructive consequences all around us, we are not to despair. Our life here on earth is not punishment, but rather testing of our faith in the Lord. Just as the Jews were to obey the Word of the Lord while in captivity as a test of faith, so we too are to obey the Word of the Lord in this world as a test of faith.

Ignore (Jeremiah 29:8-9). The second step in accepting the exile was to reject the false prophets among them whom the Lord had not sent. Their message was contrary to the Word of God.

In Jeremiah 28, one such false prophet was Hananiah. He claimed to be declaring the Word of the Lord, but his message contradicted the Word that Jeremiah received. In that chapter, the Lord had Jeremiah to wear a yoke to symbolize the yoke of

Babylon upon the people.

Hananiah took the yoke off of Jeremiah, broke it, and declared that the Lord says He will break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar from the necks of all nations.

The Lord gave Jeremiah a new message that the yoke would be of unbreakable iron and that Hananiah would die because of his false message which defied the Word of the Lord. Hananiah died that same year in the seventh month.

The false prophets preached a message the people *wanted* to hear. Jeremiah preached a message the people *needed* to hear. In 2 Timothy 4:2-4, the Apostle Paul counseled Timothy to always preach the Word.

The Word was to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine because the time was coming when people would not listen to sound doctrine. Instead, they would gather around false teachers who would say what they wanted to hear, turning away from the truth and turning to deceptive stories.

We can share the Word of God winsomely to win some to the Lord. Jude 1:22-23 teaches us to demonstrate compassion toward some to make a difference, while with others we declare the wrath of God to "pull them out of the fire."

The Lord declared His wrath toward Judah through Jeremiah, but He also declared compassion and grace through Jeremiah to the people. We see an example of grace and hope in Jeremiah 29:10-14.

Hope (Jeremiah 29:10-14). This letter from God, dictated to Jeremiah by the Spirit, proved that the Lord had not abandoned the people. Had the Lord completely given up on the people, He would not have bothered to continue speaking to them.

Their circumstances were far from what the Jews had been told by false prophets, far from their home in Judah, far from any

means of escape from their plight, but not far from the Lord if they would seek Him with all their hearts.

An interesting note is that this letter to the exiles in Babylon from God through Jeremiah was read by the prophet Daniel, according to Daniel 9:2. When he read it in his advanced years as an administrator in the Persian Empire, he realized that the 70 years of exile foretold in Jeremiah's letter were concluding. That prompted Daniel to fast and pray a mighty prayer of repentance.

Believers are sojourners in a world marred by sin, but we have hope. We have hope in the Word of the Lord that the day is coming when we are delivered into the presence of the Lord. As the Gospel song says in its title, "What a Day that Will Be!"

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